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DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ARP, G/TIP, AND DRL  
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR FOR JAMES RUDE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [KCRM](#) [KWMN](#) [SMIG](#) [ELAB](#) [KMPI](#) [MU](#)

SUBJECT: GOVERNMENT USING MEDIA TO RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT TIP

REF: A. 06 MUSCAT 1573

[1](#)B. MUSCAT 43

[1](#)C. 07 MUSCAT 822

[1](#)1. (SBU) Over the past few months, Oman's public and private press has run a number of articles about trafficking in persons (TIP) in which government officials have publicly acknowledged TIP and their actions to combat it. On February 16, the government-owned, Arabic-language daily "Oman" carried the full text of Public Prosecutor Hussein al Hilali's speech at the recently concluded United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Trafficking (UN.GIFT) conference in Vienna. Hilali's speech represented the most extensive public comments about TIP by a high ranking official to date, and coverage of the speech in both the Arabic and English-language press included a comprehensive review of Oman's existing legal framework to combat TIP; worker protections in the 2003 Labor Law; and penalties under the Penal Code for slavery, forced labor and sexual exploitation.

In his speech, Hilali linked trafficking to the commonplace practice of withholding a worker's passport and highlighted the Ministry of Manpower's (MOM) 2006 directive that prohibits this practice (ref A). (Note: Post believes this may be the first public acknowledgement of any kind that the MOM issued a circular prohibiting employers from withholding workers' passports. End note.)

[1](#)2. (SBU) Earlier articles also highlighted government action on TIP and helped to raise the subject's profile in Oman. In December, print media covered the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' (MFA) December 16 TIP workshop, in which international experts, government officials and representatives of civil society met to review the country's draft anti-TIP law (ref A). The government-owned, English-language "Oman Observer" quoted officials discussing TIP and its manifestations; the need for a comprehensive anti-TIP law to uphold Oman's international obligations to combat the crime; and the role of Oman's media in spreading awareness. The article also contained mild criticism - unusual by local standards - in running a statement by Dr. Nihal Fahmy of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (one of the international experts who attended the workshop), who called on the government to publish statistical data on trafficking crimes and convictions as part of its enforcement and awareness-raising efforts. (Note: Post notes that Dr. Fahmy's comments are the first non-American criticism of Oman's anti-trafficking measures to be published in the Omani media in more than 18-months. End note.) On January 7, the private Arabic-daily "Shabiba" published the complete draft of Oman's anti-TIP law - a departure from standard practice in which the government rarely, if ever, publicly releases draft legislation.

13. (SBU) Comment: The tone of recent TIP coverage in the local media is markedly different from the articles that appeared in the summer of 2007 following the release of Oman's Tier III ranking (ref B). The vitriolic attacks against the USG's motives and methodology have been replaced by actual information about steps the government is taking to prevent TIP. By publicly acknowledging TIP and steps needed to combat it, the government and the media are helping to raise awareness of an issue that the government previously had either ignored or denied. End comment.  
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